



MEMORANDUM

PHONE: 452-5258; 452-4169

DATE: June 9, 2009

TO: Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Glenn Kost, Parks Planning & Development Manager
Scott Vander Hyden, Capital Projects Coordinator

SUBJECT: Newport Hills Sportsfield Improvements – Response to Petition

ACTION REQUESTED: None

SUMMARY

We will review the Newport Hills Sportsfield Improvement project, focusing on the levy process, project scope, and methods being explored to address neighborhood concerns. Unless otherwise directed, staff will proceed as outlined in this report and in the 2008 Parks & Natural Areas Levy.

PROJECT & LEVY BACKGROUND

The property was purchased by King County in 1973 primarily for the purpose of baseball and soccer use at the urging of the Newport Hills Park Society. Most of the park development was completed by the Society in the late 1970's, and remains essentially the same today. Bellevue acquired the property from King County in 1996, and has completed several modest upgrades since that time. Facilities include a lighted soccer field, unlighted little league baseball field, playground equipment, restroom, picnic shelter, and off-street parking for 32 cars (see attached aerial photo).

The installation of synthetic turf at Newport Hills Park has been a high priority park project for many years, and identified in the adopted 2003 Parks & Open Space System Plan. The project would satisfy an identified need for more high quality soccer game fields, is located in an area especially lacking in quality fields, makes use of an existing lighted field to maximize program capacity, and is located in a park with existing infrastructure such as parking and restroom facilities.

In June 2007, the City Council asked the Parks & Community Services Board to conduct a public outreach process to gauge voter interest a potential Parks voter initiative, and to assist Council in making final decisions on timing, content, and funding mechanisms for the initiative. The outreach was conducted throughout the Fall 2007, and the findings are summarized in the attached January 8, 2008 report to Council. Council eventually placed the "Parks & Natural Areas" levy on the November 2008 ballot. The Newport Hills project was identified in the levy, with the fact sheet stating:

"Building on the expanded capacity of the Robinswood Sports Fields, additional synthetic fields will be installed to improve safety and play at Wilburton Hill and Newport Hills Parks."

After the decision was made to place the measure on the ballot, additional outreach was conducted to inform the public about the levy, including the distribution of fact sheets and attendance at community meetings. Shelley Marelli, Deputy Director, attended an October 21 meeting of the Newport Hills Community Club. Approximately 15-20 residents attended. The following comments/questions were raised at that meeting:

- A question about the projected timing of construction should the levy pass;
- A request that the City host a public meeting to inform the neighborhood of the project details and obtain public input prior to construction; and
- A request that part of the park remain in natural grass to accommodate the neighborhood's annual picnic.

The levy was approved with 67% of Bellevue residents voting yes. The precincts immediately surrounding Newport Hills Park indicate a similar approval percentage.

CURRENT FIELD USE & PROJECT SCOPE

The existing facility is a lighted, natural grass field used approximately 4½ months each year for organized soccer games and other youth sports activities such as sports camps. Much of this use is by neighborhood youth, as follows (2008 figures):

- Newport Youth Soccer games – 62%
- Other youth sports, including sports camps – 25%
- Adult soccer games – 13%

By early November, conditions have deteriorated such that the field is no longer safe for play and is closed to organized use. A synthetic sports surface will allow for year-round use, with the distribution of use expected to remain predominantly neighborhood use. Because of the proximity of the nearby residents to the field and past requests, no use is allowed after 10pm rather than the 11pm curfew used for all other lighted athletic fields.

The project scope includes converting the existing grass soccer field to synthetic turf and upgrading to a state-of-the-art lighting system. The new lighting system will improve the lighting quality for the teams and reduce spill light and glare for the neighbors. As budget allows, other improvements will be considered, including a pedestrian walkway connection along the east edge of the park, new ballfield fencing and backstop, restroom upgrades, baseball infield conversion to synthetic turf, and infield relocation to the east side of the park to help with traffic and pedestrian flow.

PUBLIC PROCESS TO-DATE

A community meeting was held on April 29 at Newport Hills Swim and Tennis Club. Meeting invitations were mailed to over 2,000 nearby residents and advertised on the City's website.

Approximately 12 park neighbors and 3 local sports representatives attended. This meeting served as a general introduction of the project, and to field questions and concerns. The following concerns were raised by the park neighbors at the meeting and in three follow up written comment sheets:

- Increasing organized sports use to year-round would limit open space availability to the neighborhood.
- Noise levels and light glare experienced during games will now be year-round.
- Late evening, inappropriate behavior, and language by adult users experienced by adjacent neighbors will now be year-round, and the City should limit field times to minimize adult use.
- Parking in the neighborhood and surrounding streets is currently a problem and will now be year-round.
- The park will lose its neighborhood park feel and become a "sports complex" which is not an appropriate use for this park.

On May 7, Parks' staff met with four adjacent neighbors to discuss ways to address the privacy issues discussed at the community meeting for those living adjacent to the park. Fencing and landscape buffering options were discussed. One attendee volunteered to discuss these options with all adjacent neighbors in an attempt to gain a consensus on a desired solution - this process is ongoing.

On May 12, the attached petition signed by 28 nearby residents was presented to the Park Board highlighting the concerns raised at the initial community meeting, and urging the City to partner with the Bellevue School District to improve an area school sportsfield instead of Newport Hills Park.

ADDRESSING NEIGHBORHOOD CONCERNS

We are exploring the following project elements to help address the concerns raised by the neighbors, and to be a good neighbor:

- We have committed to replace the existing light fixtures with state-of-the-art field lighting to minimize noise, glare, and ambient light.
- We are working with our consultants, the Transportation Department, and Bellevue School District to improve parking conditions around the park and to increase parking capacity at the park.
- We will notify adult user groups that inappropriate behavior and language will not be tolerated, and that failure to comply may result in revoking field use.
- The design will not include a full perimeter fence in order to maintain an open park feeling, and to encourage neighborhood use when the field is not scheduled, similar to the Robinswood fields.
- The design will retain a significant area of natural turf to allow for general park use and to facilitate the neighborhood picnic.
- We continue to work directly with the adjacent neighbors to explore measures to reduce the impact of the field on their properties.

We have also had very preliminary discussions with Bellevue School District representatives, who remain reluctant to complete significant field upgrades at individual schools because it results in district-wide inequities. A potential site is the BSD-owned former Eastside Catholic HS/Ringdall MS site, located across SE 60th Street from Newport Hills Park. Starting in 2010, this site will be used for 6-8 years as a swing school for the middle school renovation program. No formal discussions have been held with the school district.

PROJECT TIMELINE & NEXT STEPS

The project is currently in design and cost estimating phase. We expect to submit for environmental review and apply for permits in June. Depending on permit review and weather conditions, construction could begin this Fall and be complete next Spring. We feel the Newport Hills Park synthetic field conversion remains an appropriate project, and that most concerns can be reasonably addressed. Unless directed otherwise, we will proceed with the project as described. A second community meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 17, where we will present the park design. We remain committed to working with the neighbors to help reduce the impacts this project may have.

ATTACHMENTS

Aerial Photo

Public Outreach Findings – January 8, 2009

Petition

Newport Hills Community Park- 6029 120th Ave. SE



To: City of Bellevue Parks Board

From: Homeowners near Newport Hills Community Park

Date: May 8, 2009

We, the undersigned Newport Hills Park neighbors, hereby ask the Parks Board to reconsider the upgrade planned for Newport Hills Neighborhood Park. The proposed upgrade and the increase in programming will significantly change the use of our neighborhood park.

We have several reasons on which our request is based. At the recent informational meeting held by the Parks Department, the Park Staff presented a proposed concept for the Newport Hills Neighborhood Park that was comparable to Robinswood Community Park. Robinswood Park is both beautiful and functional, making good use of its more than 25 acres for multiple recreational and sports activities. At Robinswood Community Park there is a large natural buffer area between the sports complex and the neighbors. After visiting Robinswood it appears the buffer area is approximately 200 to 400 feet from existing neighborhoods and the distance from the light fixtures is slightly greater.

The Park Staff indicated that usage of the sports fields will significantly increase at Newport Hills Neighborhood Park with the proposed upgrade due to the year round use of the soccer field. This upgrade and usage will change the use of our neighborhood park from serving our Newport Hills community providing an area for multiple seasonal recreation activities to more of a year round soccer and baseball sports field complex. This neighborhood park is used for many functions and activities outside of sports. The Newport Hill Community Association uses the soccer field for a community wide annual gathering on the fourth of July. At other times neighbors use the fields for picnics, to play soccer and baseball with friends and family, to exercise pets, etc.

The City of Bellevue Parks & Open Space Plan 2003 describes a neighborhood park as follows: "Neighborhood parks are larger and have multiple recreational facilities, both active and passive. They can range up to 15 acres in size and serve roughly one-half mile radius. Neighborhood and mini-parks are intended as mainly as walk-to or bike-to facilities; therefore, they either have no or very limited off-street parking facilities. These neighborhood parks should not create parking or traffic impacts to the neighborhoods in which they are located." (p.71 City Of Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan 2003). This is a very good description of Newport Hills Park. Newport Hills Neighborhood Park is approximately 7 acres. There are a few parking spaces on the east side of the park.

Parking is currently a problem with the limited spaces available in the off street parking area. This causes park users to park along S.E. 60th Street, park in the old Eastside Catholic High School parking lot as well as the residential neighborhood of Densmore.

The Park staff has offered some ideas of how to develop more parking spaces; however, the parking problem just exemplifies the lack of space for this type of sports facility with year round use.

Lighting and noise have been a problem for the neighbors bordering the park. The light fixtures are approximately 15 feet from the homeowners property lines and the soccer field is approximately 27 feet from the property lines. The light fixtures are taller than most of the trees that serve as a light buffer and the lights' rays shine in the windows of the homes abutting the park as well as homes that are not on the park boundary. The noise from the lights as well as the noise and language from the soccer games disturbs many of the neighbors and inhibits their ability to leave their windows open during the evening hours when adult games are played.

We understand that there is a demand for sports facilities but Newport Hills Park was not designed for the amount of use that will accompany the proposed upgrades and will affect the nearby homeowners and neighbors significantly. We encourage the parks department to partner with Bellevue School District to develop recreational and sports facilities that will meet the needs of the community and adhere to the Bellevue Parks & Open Space Plan 2003.

Sincerely,
The Neighbors of Newport Hills Neighborhood Park

Signature Page

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|-----|---------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 43. | <u>Vera Livshits</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>6219 119th Ave SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address Bellevue, WA 98004 |
| 44. | <u>Hyo Sun Jung</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>6060 118th Ave SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address Bellevue, WA 98006 |
| 45. | <u>Vicki L. Hansman</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>10412 118th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98004</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 46. | <u>JAMES R. CORNELIUS</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>11727 SE 61st Pl. BELLEVUE, WA 98004</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 47. | <u>Debbie Worthey</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>11611 SE 61st Pl. Bellevue 98004</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 48. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
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| 49. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
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| 56. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
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|-----|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 29. | <u>EDWARD</u> | <u>Edward Wei</u> | <u>6250 114th PL SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 30. | <u>Ken Schoenfeld Jr.</u> | <u>Ken Schoenfeld Jr.</u> | <u>6249 119th PI SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 31. | <u>Tranema La</u> | <u>Tranema La</u> | <u>6192 118th SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 32. | <u>Randy Hun</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>5213 120th Ave SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 33. | <u>Zhong Su</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>6191 118th AVE SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 34. | <u>RAY STACY</u> | <u>Ray Stacy</u> | <u>6198 118th AVE SE BEL</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 35. | <u>Mao ngi</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>6197 118th AVE S.E BEL</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 36. | <u>Chad Harkness</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>6086 118th AVE SE BEL WA</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 37. | <u>Krist Sahlinger</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>6024 - 118th AVE SE</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 38. | <u>Ed SHIMIZU</u> | <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>11748 SE 60th PI</u> |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 39. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | Name | Signature | Address |
| 40. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
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| 41. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
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| 42. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | Name | Signature | Address |

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|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. <u>CUOPIA NGUYEN</u>
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| 2. <u>HOANG ONG</u>
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| 3. <u>Yi-Lun P. Hsu</u>
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| 4. <u>DAN FLODS</u>
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| 5. <u>Carolyn Pastoriza</u>
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| 6. <u>Michelle Biefang</u>
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| 7. <u>Laurie Wright</u>
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| 8. <u>Barb Maduell</u>
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| 9. <u>Hironi Kato</u>
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| 10. <u>Marilyn McKenna</u>
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| 12. <u>Quynh Huong</u>
Name | <u>Quynh Huong</u>
Signature | <u>6003 118th Ave.</u>
Address |
| 13. <u>Kim Pham</u>
Name | <u>Kim Pham</u>
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Address |
| 14. <u>ELI M. SAMAC</u>
Name | <u>Eli M. Samac</u>
Signature | <u>6059 118 Ave SE</u>
Address |



DRAFT

Date: January 8, 2008
To: Bellevue City Council
From: Merle Keeney, Parks & Community Services Board Chair
Subject: Outreach Process and Recommendation for Potential Parks Voter Initiative

Background

Bellevue City Council asked the Parks & Community Services Board to conduct a public outreach process this fall to help determine community support for a potential parks voter initiative. As you know, Bellevue voters have approved seven parks ballot measures since the City was incorporated in 1953, with the most recent measure being the 1988 park bond. Unless a new ballot measure is approved by voters, city property taxes will not include voter-approved funding to expand the parks system for the first time in over 50 years.

Public Outreach

Based on Council direction, the Parks & Community Services Board conducted a community feedback process through the following activities:

1. Attended community gatherings, including the Robinswood Sportsfield Grand Opening (October 6), Kelsey Creek Farm Fair (October 13), and a Network on Aging meeting. Overall, board members discussed ideas for a potential voter initiative with over 200 individuals during these three events.
2. Conducted a Public Hearing at the November 7 Board meeting. Notice of the public hearing was published in the official City newspaper and all major partnership groups were notified of the opportunity to comment. Ultimately, thirteen individuals/ organizations participated: SPLASH, Bellevue Youth Theater Foundation, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, Bellevue Senior Advisory Council, Bridle Trails Park Foundation, Surrey Downs Community Club, and representatives from several local sportsfield user groups.
3. A survey instrument/comment card was distributed at the various community gatherings and was available on the City's web site. The on-line survey was available for a two month period (October 16 to December 14, 2007), and was prominently located on the home page of the City website. The internet survey provided a valuable way to gather community input, with 332 individuals completing the on-line survey.

Combined, 558 surveys/comment cards were completed which are summarized in the attached report. While we are pleased with the overall response rate, it should be noted that this was not a random sample survey that can be interpreted to statistically represent the opinions of the entire community. Respondents were either intercepted at one of the community events or volunteered to complete the on-line survey. Despite these limitations, however, it should be noted that the results closely matched prior research findings for visitation rates (question 2), overall satisfaction (question 3), and funding preferences (question 4).

Key Findings:

- **Overall Support.** Residents support Bellevue Parks & Community Services, and recognize the value parks and programs contribute to the quality of life in Bellevue. Overall, 94% of residents rated the overall quality of parks as “good or better” and 93% indicated that they were “likely or very likely” to support additional tax measures for parks.
- **Need for Additional Investment.** Residents understood the need to continue investing in the park system and we did not hear opposition to additional voter-approved property tax measures. Overall, the concept of replacing the expiring 1988 park bond was very popular. Our approach did not specifically address overall fiscal tolerance or preferred funding mechanisms (ie. bond vs. levy), and we recommend staff and Council conduct additional research on these issues.
- **Priorities for Additional Funding.** The survey indicates the highest support for the following project areas: protect water quality in Bellevue’s lakes and streams, preserve natural areas and open space, make sure new parks have same level of maintenance as existing parks, and complete existing parks. While development projects such as new neighborhood/community parks, sportsfield improvements, and indoor athletic facilities did not test as high, all project categories were considered “very or somewhat” important by the majority of residents. Again, it should be noted that these results are very consistent with prior research findings even though we did not conduct a statistically valid survey.
- **Citizen Comments.** The survey also provided an opportunity to provide open-ended comments on the future of the park system. While most comments related to general park acquisition and development, several themes emerged: the need for additional aquatic facilities, sportsfield improvements including all-weather surfaces, open space preservation and environmental stewardship, trails and mobility improvements, downtown park development, and indoor tennis courts. An unedited list of all survey comments is included in the attached report.

Recommendation

The Parks & Community Services Board recommends that City Council and staff continue to plan for a voter initiative in 2008. We understand that Council will discuss this issue early this year, including the key issues of project mix, funding mechanism, and election timing. We encourage City Council to make these important policy decisions as soon as practical so the City can continue the public information and outreach process. Several individuals encouraged the City to provide information to the community as early in the process as possible, and the Parks & Community Services Board is prepared to play an active role in support of this effort.

The Parks & Community Services Board also acknowledges that the list of potential acquisition and development projects significantly exceeds funding that could come from a voter initiative alone. Given the relatively short period of time before a fall election and the inherent difficulty obtaining majority or supermajority approval, the key challenge is to develop a package that can be supported by the broader community. We encourage Council to consider the information obtained through this public outreach process and any supplemental research findings when developing this final package.

Feel free to contact me or members of the board if you have additional questions about this report or our community outreach effort. The board is excited about the prospect of continuing the history of successful parks voter initiatives in Bellevue, and is ready to support Council throughout this process.

Attachment:

1. Topline Survey Results and Comments
2. November 7 Public Hearing Minutes